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Choosing Drapery and Slip Cover Fabrics

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, October 24, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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JOHN BAKER:

Starting today we're making a little change in our regular schedule. Ruth Van Deman's changing the day for her home economics reports from Thursday to Tuesday Thursday we'll have another very interesting feature for you. But from now on... that is from now until for some good reason we have to juggle our schedule around again...just make a note on your calendar that Tuesday is the day Ruth Van Deman brings the news from the Bureau of Home Economics.

Ruth, I hope Tuesday's going to be just as good a listening day for homemaker as Thursday.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

I think so John. I think it's going to be even better for some. Quite a number of our Farm and Home friends have written me that Tuesday is the ideal time. They like to listen to the radio as they iron.....

BAKER:

We'll have to pass that along to Walter Blaufuss. Maybe he can swing his music to the rhythm of the iron.....

VAN DEMAN:

Music does help. I have one friend who always moves her little portable radio down in the basement on ironing days.

Well, music and ironing aren't exactly what I'd planned to talk about today. One of our Witchita, Kansas, listeners has reminded me that it's time to talk about curtains and upholstery fabrics and slip covers.

BAKER:

I suppose she's got an urge to fix up the house. It seems to strike women long about this time o'year.

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly. Every woman wants to fix up the house for winter, just as she wants to buy a new hat.

BAKER:

But, Ruth, are curtains and drapery materials so difficult to buy?

VAN DEMAN:

Not if you can find what you want and know what you're buying.... I was talking to Bess Viemont Morrison this morning about the studies she's making on drapery and slip cover materials as part of our research on cotton. She's been running some tests to see which types stand up best...whether they'll keep their color in a strong light...how much they shrink when they're washed. Some of her findings are quite illuminating.

(Over)

BAKER:

As for instance.....

VAN DEMAN:

For one thing, it pays to read the label on the selvage of the fabric. Fortunately more and more manufacturers are putting more and more information on their labels and selvage marks.

But a mark, that just says "wash-fast" or "washable" isn't much help. You can't tell what it means. It may mean that the color of the goods is permanent. But it may mean nothing at all about how much it will shrink.

BAKER:

With these new ways of taking the shrink out of materials, I thought that problem was fairly well licked.

VAN DEMAN:

Not entirely. Not all fabrics go through those shrinkage processes, and even when they do, it doesn't always mean they won't shrink some more. The Federal Trade Commission has worked with manufacturers to get accurate labels about the amount of shrinkage that is still left in a fabric...the residual shrinkage, as they call it.

BAKER:

In other words...how much shrink will the preshrunk shrink....

VAN DEMAN:

.....if the preshrunk will shrink some.....

BAKER:

(Sotto voce) I shrink to think.

VAN DEMAN:

Don't misunderstand me here. All these efforts toward pre-shrinking fabrics are some of the great advances in modern textile manufacture. And any labeling of curtain and upholstery fabrics with definite facts about the qualities that will show up after they're put into use, is a great help.

And I'm happy to find that lots of the goods in the moderate-price ranges are so labeled. Mrs. Morrison showed me sample after sample...in all kinds of colors and designs, to suit all kinds of tastes.

BAKER:

Now when you get down to colors and designs, and can you tell when you're right and when you're wrong...I mean when you're buying curtains or a chair covering to go in a certain room.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm going to answer that Yankee fashion. How do you pick a certain tie to go with a certain suit?

BAKER:

This is getting personal. Well, I guess I try one and then another until I

find one that looks well.....at least one that I think looks well.

VAN DEMAN:
And if it's a brown suit you wouldn't choose a bright green tie with red flowers on it.

BAKER:
Not unless I was color-blind.

VAN DEMAN:
All right...color harmony or pleasing color contrast... Art Principle No. 1. And if you were picking a tie to go with a rough tweed suit?

BAKER:
I wouldn't choose my best Sunday-go-meeting silk tie.

VAN DEMAN:
Or the shiny satin you wore to so-and-so's wedding?

BAKER:
No, to go with a tweed suit I think I might pick a hand-woven wool tie, or something just a little rough and ready. They'd go together.

VAN DEMAN:
Exactly. Art Principle No. 2. Textures and patterns of the type to go together. It's the same in a room. Very shiny satins and brocades of formal design look out of place in a room that's used for everyday living, with the youngsters romping around.

And, John, your not being a long-haired poet, or a world-famous portrait painter, I don't suppose it would occur to you to tie your tie in a big bow with long flowing ends.

BAKER:
Now look here. There are limits beyond which even I .....

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, I know, but haven't you seen things just as exotic done in the name of interior decoration? Ruffles, and fringes, and flounces, and furbelows, where plain hems and straight talored edges would have looked better and worn better.

BAKER:
I've had my own private opinion, but I thought maybe I just didn't know.

VAN DEMAN:
Art Principle No. 3 has to do with line and proportion.

In the window curtain bulletin, Bess Viemont.....

BAKER:
Now Bess Viemont Morrison?

VAN DEMAN:

The same...In her bulletin on window curtaining she gives the ways of making different kinds of curtains, she devotes a few pages to these art principles we've been talking about.

BAKER:

A very sensible idea...very helpful I should think. And how's the supply of that bulletin holding out? Are there still free copies?

VAN DEMAN:

There were yesterday.....

BAKER:

Then barring a run overnight on Window Curtaining...that is the right title, isn't it?

VAN DEMAN:

That's right. We call it the curtain bulletin for short. And don't you want to mention the slip cover leaflet too?

BAKER:

Two good bulletins are always better than one, certainly..... Well, Farm and Home friends, I think we've mentioned, both these Bureau of Home Economics bulletins before...Window Curtaining and Slip Covers. But, as Ruth Van Deman has just reminded us, they are particularly timely right now...the season for the house to be put into order for the winter. So for any of you who want these bulletins on Window Curtaining and Slip Covers, just send your name on a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C., and back the bulletins will come in due time.

VAN DEMAN:

Provided the address, as well as the name, is on the card.

BAKER:

Yes, Farm and Home friends, if you want Window Curtaining and Slip Cover bulletins, one or the other, or both, don't fail to put your name and address on the card. And as Ruth Van Deman slides out of her place here at the microphone to let I. W. Duggan in, I'll remind you also that if you want to hear her home economics news next week, you'll find her on the Farm and Home Hour Tuesday... Tuesday, not Thursday as you've been accustomed to listen for these Bureau of Home Economics reports.